

NIH Partnership Council Minutes

Thursday, February 15, 2001

Attendees: Charles Palmer, Howard Hochman, Richard Laubach, Leonard Taylor, Walter Jones, Tony Clifford, Mike Showers, Penney Baile

Facilitator: Fern Kaufman

Old Business: Minutes of Tuesday, January 16, 2001, Council meeting reviewed and approved

New Business:

- Herb Holder's presentation on the ORS budget process

NIH has a three-year budget phase covering 2002, 2001, and 2000. The 2002 budget process began in the Spring of 2000 with the review and update of budget requirements. IC data was consolidated by NIH, and reviewed by NIH which passes back a decision. Normally a budget mark would have been submitted to OMB in the early Fall. Herb explained that due to numerous continuing resolutions and the change in administration this years budget mark has not yet been submitted to OMB. Once the mark is submitted, OMB issues a passback to HHS and it becomes the President's budget. This budget is usually submitted to Congress in January. Agencies prepare a narrative submission to Congress, and Agencies testify before the House and the Senate to defend their congressional justification. The House and Senate issues reports on appropriation levels, steers passage, and selects conferees to negotiate differences. A bill is submitted, the conferees report, and it's submitted for vote and passage. Finally, the President signs the bill into Public Law.

The ICs receive appropriations. They develop budget mechanism spreads and submit quarterly apportionment plans to OMB.

The ORS '01 budget consists of a: (1) management fund– a pool of money contributed by all of the ICs, amounting to about 25% of its budget; and (2) a service and supply fund– a combination of charging customers directly through either fee-for-service or membership services for specific services provided, accounting for about 75% of the budget. ORS derives its budget resources from the Intramural Research and Research Management and Support funds of the IC appropriations. ORS does not make budget requests directly to Congress, therefore allowing more flexibility within the NIH budget spectrum, but ORS has to compete with CC and CIT for a “bigger piece of the pie”.

Richard Laubach questioned how ORS would ever “catch up” or be made whole in its budget, since the organization is \$100 million in the hole. He said staff was down 30%, but there was 40% more work. He also noted it seemed like there were more supervisors. He said workers are put in difficult and dangerous work situations. He said men at times work alone in situations in

which another man was usually required to be present, thereby causing safety issues.

ORS management (Leonard Taylor and Tony Clifford) said that everything being done now is in an effort to improve the situation. There is an effort to increase the number of workers and managers. As square footage increases on campus, so does the need for repairs. A formula needs to be used to calculate a specific amount of money needed to maintain a specific amount of square footage. ORS needs to make a business case that when a new building opens on campus, more money is needed to staff it for maintenance and repairs— ORS cannot simply stretch the same number of workers out over a broader area. NIH is close to recognizing that it can't add buildings without the resources to staff it.

Mr. Laubach suggested ORS give IC staff a “dog and pony show” to show them what it takes to maintain the boilers and the chillers. He also questioned how ORS would stop the customers from using their credit cards to get services elsewhere. Mr. Taylor said the challenge would be in explaining how ORS does a better job of providing the services. Mr. Clifford said he felt ORS was doing a better job of show and tell in convincing the ICs of money needed for repair and maintenance. He noted this was the first year of ORS doing business in this way. He said that Mr. Laubach said more people are needed in the power plant, but we need to determine how many people we really need. We need communication to justify more money (such as giving the example of there being more equipment to take care of). Mr. Laubach noted that AFGE have means available to them that management does not. AFGE can lobby for more money for ORS.

Mr. Laubach said the front-line workers are not being asked what is needed and what should be done. He told ORS management, “If AFGE can help out, tell us what you need.” He said better communication is needed between the managers, the directors, and the workers, because the size of our infrastructure is unbelievable.

The facilitator summarized what she felt was a productive discussion based on three things she heard:

- 1) AFGE wants to know how it can help;
- 2) AFGE offered the idea of a tour to give people a better understanding of ORS jobs and what needs to be done to maintain the campus;
- 3) There needs to be a better connection between the front-line workers and the people who work on the budget.

Mr. Taylor said he saw the potential for increasing partnership efforts with the union, but he noted that what ORS can/can't do may or may not be able to be done in the same way in CC or other organizations. He said he couldn't make a commitment for other organizations. He said he would propose that representatives from the union be in the room when the budget is being worked on, and that he liked the suggestion of the tour and would recommend it to the advisory committee. He said it would need to be clear ORS is piloting these efforts and not setting the standard for NIH. He committed to seeing how feasible some of these ideas are, so that further discussion can be held on them at the next Partnership Council meeting.

Next meeting: Monday, March 19, 2001, 1:30 p.m., Building 31 Room B3CO2B.